Declaration of the Rights of the child

UNITED NATIONS

Declaration of the Rights of the child

On 20 November 1959, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The spirit of the document was reflected in the preamble, which said, in part, "mankind owes the child the best it has to give". Many of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration were restatements of sections of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other earlier documents, but the international community was convinced that the special needs of the child were so urgent that they called for a separate, more specific declaration.

As early as 1946, the United Nations had demonstrated its deep concern over the problems of children by establishing UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. In its early years UNICEF concentrated on emergency aid for the children who were victims of the war in Europe. Later it broadened its activities to include long-range programmes designed to prepare children all over the world for productive lives. UNICEF stressed the importance of making full use of human resources that are so essential to economic and social development. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child provided UNICEF with inspiration as well as meaningful guidance as the Fund entered a period of impressive expansion. Today, UNICEF is helping "mankind give the best" to 700 million children in 120 countries.

The enduring value of UNICEF's work was perhaps best symbolized by its winning the 1965

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Nobel Peace Prize. In 1969, the tenth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the task of implementing the document was still far from completion. However the guide-lines for solid progress on behalf of the children were bold and clear.

The full text of the United Nations Declaration of 20 November, 1959, is reproduced below. In ten carefully worded principles the Declaration affirms the rights of the child to enjoy special protection and to be given opportunities and facilities to enable him to develop in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity; to have a name and a nationality from his birth; to enjoy the benefits of social security, including adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services; to receive special treatment, education and care if he is handicapped; to grow up in an atmosphere of affection and security and, wherever possible, in the care and under the responsibility of his parents; to receive education, to be among the first to receive protection and relief in times of disaster; to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation; and to be protected from practices which may foster any form of discrimination. Finally, the Declaration emphasizes that the child shall be brought up "in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood".

Declaration of the Rights of the Child

PREAMBLE

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Whereas the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth,

Whereas the need for such special safeguards has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924, and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the statutes of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children,

Whereas mankind owes to the child the best it has to give,

Now therefore,

The General Assembly

Proclaims this Declaration of the Rights of the Child to the end that he may have a happy childhood and enjoy for his own good and for the good of society the rights and freedoms herein set forth, and calls upon parents, upon men and women as individuals and upon voluntary organizations, local authorities and national Governments to recognize these rights and strive for their observance by legislative and other measures progressively taken in accordance with the following principles:

PRINCIPLE 1

The child shall enjoy all the rights set forth in this Declaration. All children, without any exception whatsoever, shall be entitled to these rights,

without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, whether of himself or of his family.

PRINCIPLE 2

The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

PRINCIPLE 3

The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality.

PRINCIPLE 4

The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security. He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health; to this end special care and protection shall be provided both to him and to his mother, including adequate pre-natal and post-natal care. The child shall have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.

PRINCIPLE 5

The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.

PRINCIPLE 6

The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and in any case in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support. Payment of State and other assistance towards the maintenance of children of large families is desirable.

PRINCIPLE 7

The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture, and enable him on a basis of equal opportunity to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.

The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents.

The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right.

PRINCIPLE 8

The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief.

PRINCIPLE 9

The child shall be protected against all forms of

neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form.

The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.

PRINCIPLE 10

The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.

Publicity to be given to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child

The General Assembly,

Considering that the Declaration of the Rights of the Child calls upon parents, upon men and women as individuals, and upon voluntary organizations, local authorities and national Governments to recognize the rights set forth therein and strive for their observance.

1. *Recommends* Governments of Member States, the specialized agencies concerned and the appropriate non-governmental organizations to publicize as widely as possible the text of this Declaration;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to have this Declaration widely disseminated and, to that end, to use every means at his disposal to publish and distribute texts in all languages possible.

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